

# LEXICAL MEANS OF EXPRESSING POLITENESS IN THE AMERICAN AND THE BRITISH LANGUAGE SYSTEMS

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**Аннотация:** В данной статье рассматриваются особенности использования лексических средств реализации категории вежливости на примере произведений американских и британских писателей. Содержательность лексических средств, потенциальная информативность создает представление о нормах речевого поведения что расширяет представления о языке вежливости и языке этикета и способствует развитию науки о формах речевого общения.

**Ключевые слова:** категория вежливости, средства реализации категории вежливости, межкультурная коммуникация, прагматика высказываний, речевой этикет, лексические единицы.

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the features of using lexical means of implementing the category of politeness on the example of the works of American and British writers. The content of lexical means, potential informativeness creates an idea of the norms of speech behavior, which expands the understanding of the language of politeness and the language of etiquette and contributes to the development of the science of the forms of speech communication.

**Keywords:** category of politeness, means of implementing the category of politeness, intercultural communication, pragmatics of statements, speech etiquette, lexical units.

In order for lexical units to function in speech as means of implementing politeness, they, like grammatical structures, must express a positive attitude towards an interlocutor or an event. The implementation of the same lexical units in a large number of statements related to a certain context makes it possible to identify the correlation of the means of implementing politeness with these situations. In the speech means of implementing politeness, social, ethnic, age, confessional and other differences can appear, as well as in the formula of speech etiquette. The preference for specific units and the degree of their compatibility with other words and lexical and grammatical constructions are determined by the speaker's communicative intention and determine the specificity of the utterance in terms of politeness.

The functional semantics of the means of expressing politeness is partly determined by the pragmatics of the utterance. Knowledge of the lexical semantics of a word that acts as a means of implementing politeness in a particular statement is often insufficient for the listener to determine the speaker's attitude to the facts described, to derive the propositions and presuppositions of this statement. It is the means of expressing politeness that inform the listener about it. Since cognitive structures are more or less similar in different languages, inferred propositions and presuppositions depend on the actual interpretation of such structures and a particular speech act.

The variety of lexical means expressing politeness that can be distinguished in the research can be represented by 1) exclamations, 2) the verb of suggestion that precedes subordinate clauses in complex sentences, and 3) implicit means of expressing politeness, which are replaced in the text by the author's words corresponding to them.

It is proposed to analyze the lexical means of expressing politeness from words with the semantics of subjective modality, expressing the speaker's evaluative-emotional attitude to objects or situations [Galperin 1981]. The presence in speech of the means of denoting politeness with the semantics of subjective modality makes it possible to give speech maximum expressiveness. The semantics of the subjective modality includes pleasure, joy, admiration, approval, understanding of the interlocutor, an invitation to a conversation or a readiness to continue it, reduce the tension caused by a forced pause, etc. The lexical units with the meaning of subjective modality include the exclamations *Ah, Oh, why, well*, the adverb *O.K.* [Swan 1984], more typical for Americans, which are exclamations denoting a reaction of the listener or the thoughts and feelings of the speaker himself. As a rule, the contextual semantics of such means of expressing politeness that open the statement is revealed or clarified in the course of the dialogue.

At present, it is difficult to imagine polite communication without these means of implementing politeness, they convey the feelings and reactions of the interlocutors more concisely and intelligibly, their pronunciation is closely connected with the pragmatic attitude, carried out with their help more successfully. The following examples can be cited as an illustration.

*“Ah, Mr. Eliot,” she breathed, a trifle ominously. “I’ll do what I can.”*  
*Then she got down to business* [Snow 1956, 148].

The use of the exclamation *Ah* in the above example accompanies an appeal, one of the purposes of which is to attract the attention of the interlocutor. This is also facilitated by the means of implementing politeness *Ah*, which expresses joy at an unexpected meeting and, of course, attracts the attention of the interlocutor. In this

statement, the contextual meaning of the means of implementing politeness allows us to attribute it to the same thematic group as the appeal itself.

In the following example, the exclamations *Oh, dear me*, as a means of implementing politeness, intensify the meaning of the statement - an apology, an admission of guilt.

Shan Tung was out for his walk in the Park with Miss Camaby – “Oh, dear me, yes, it was all my fault,” chimed in the companion. “How could I have been so stupid, so careless.” [Christie 1978, 115]

However, in some cases, the means of expressing politeness only modify (but do not determine) the general tone of the conversation, since the situation does not require compliance with the norms of politeness, and uttering exclamations is not of decisive importance for the speaker or listener.

“One of our leading citizens is stung with the Santa Claus affliction, and he's due in town tomorrow with half the folderol that's painted red and made in Germany. The youngest kid we got in Yellowhammer packs a forty-five and a safety razor. followed we're mighty shy on anybody to say 'Oh' and 'Ah' when we light the candles on the Christmas tree.” [Henry 1979, 60]

The above can also be attributed to the means of implementing politeness well, which softens the tone of the statement and promotes friendly communication.

Adverb *O.K.* always expresses consent and recognition of correctness in only what was said or the situation as a whole. As noted, its use as a means of expressing politeness is typical of the American version. Another example can be provided that conveys the intention of the hero of the story to make concessions, his desire to positively set up the participants in the conversation.

“Christ!” said Bill scornfully. “Did you think I didn't trust you? ...Christ! I've got too much faith in you to be afraid.”

“I'll take off the bandages now, if you're ready.”

“Okay!” said Bill. “I'm not worrying any” [March 1978, 116].

The word *why*, according to the functions performed in the statement, can be attributed to the thematic groups "Greeting", "Clarification", "Approval",

"Condolence". Like all the above exclamations, *why* has become a common communication formula that establishes contact with the interlocutor.

She broke off as a chair creaked and another man, an aviator from Camp Harry Lee, emerged from the obscurity of the veranda.

Why, Canby! she cried. "How are you?"

He and Bill Knowles waited with the tenseness of open litigants.

"Canby, I want to whisper to you, honey," she said, after just a second. "You'll excuse us, Bill" [Fitzgerald 1996, 217].

In this example, the *why* expresses joy in the same way as the means of conveying politeness, the salutation. In the following example, expressing the same positive emotions, the same words, as a means of implementing politeness, also perform the greeting function in the context.

"*Why, it's old L.S.,*" said Herbert Jekyll giving me his manly, forthright handshake. [Snow 1956, 232].

Along with the above exclamations and the adverb *O.K.* the function of a means of expressing politeness can also be performed by other words that in the system of the language do not belong to either significant or official parts of speech, and their use in this function is uncharacteristic. These are words like *Christ, dear me, now.*

The use of several means of politeness realization in one statement makes it more convincing in terms of politeness realization. In the example from the story "A Tooth for Paul Revere" by Stephan Vincent Benet, the word *well* is combined in the statement with the means of implementing the politeness *I quite agree*, which can cause the listener to have a favorable attitude towards the person pronouncing these words. In turn, this indicates the acceptability, from the point of view of the speaker, of the selected units of communication in terms of politeness.

"Nobly done, friend," said the sharp-faced man, "and I'm glad to find another true-hearted loyalist in this pestilent, rebellious city."

"Well, I don't know as I quite agree with you about that," said Lige [Benet 1963, 127].

Next, we will consider the use of verbs of mental activity as a means of implementing politeness, which are often pronounced by the speaker at the beginning of the utterance and which can be combined into the semantic group "assumption". These are the verbs *to think, to guess, to suppose, to hope, to believe* and some other verbs and phrases less commonly used in direct communication: *to doubt, to imagine, to dare, to be afraid, to be bound, etc.*

The listed words contain a unit of meaning in the semantic structure, which gives them a certain degree of uncertainty about the reliability of what the individual broadcasts to his communicative partner. The use of these verbs is associated with the intention to show tact and politeness, and according to the rules of etiquette, is appropriate in verbal communication. The highlighted verbs perform a regulatory function, indirectly demonstrate the speaker's desire to delicately convey his own position to the speaker. The semantic structure of these verbs excludes irony, allusions, defiance and arrogance, that is, everything that is not consistent with the concept of etiquette. These verbs are a means of tactful expression of one's own opinion, and they can be attributed to the means of implementing politeness. They psychologically prepare the listener for an adequate, non-aggressive perception of the message, affect his attention, interest.

Verbs of the assumption denote thought processes and are used in the statement in the main clause, after which the conjunction *that* introduces a subordinate clause, although the conjunction may be omitted.

Considering verbs with general suggestive semantics from the point of view of the speaker's polite speech behaviour, it should be noted that as they move away from the initial neutral point these verbs serve to express the speaker's greater confidence, his greater conviction in the correctness of his words. The verb *to think* has the highest degree of neutrality in this series, it only expresses the implementation of a mental act for the sake of formulating a thought. This thought can be either precise or inaccurate, so the means of implementing politeness corresponding to the verb *to think* does have to defend the point of view of the speaker, it indicates the hypothetical nature of the statement following it.

A horrible thought passed through the Dutchman's mind, and he shuddered.

“I think you must be mad. I don't know what has come over you.”

She shrugged her shoulders [Maugham 1951, 453].

It is the verb *to think*, as a means of implementing politeness, that softens the tone of the statement, removes the shade of rudeness, and expresses the speaker's unwillingness to offend the interlocutor. The semantics of uncertainty is also present in the meaning of the verb *to guess* - “guess something from an insignificant detail”, and its use is semantically close to the use of the verb *to think*, the same shade of uncertainty and lack of evidence. The meaning of the verb affects its use as. Giving an uncertain tone to his statement, the speaker cannot insist on his point of view, so the statement sounds like one of the possible attitudes towards the event.

They got in just before the rain began to fall again.

“I guess she'll get her fine clothes spoilt,” said Mrs. Davidson with a bitter sneer.

Davidson did not come in till they were half-way through dinner [Maugham 1963, 203].

The verb *to suppose*, preceding the statement, emphasizes indecision, a share of doubt, lack of responsibility for what was said, the possibility of error. The speaker means that his words can be challenged, although in society this point of view is shared by many.

Here, in the example “Well, I suppose you are rather old. If I'm ever in love with someone I won't be horrid to them.” “That's a very good rule, Barbara. Remember that rule when the time comes” [Murdoch 1981, 183] one of the pragmatic tasks is realized: to express one's attitude towards the interlocutor, but this is done in a mild form. Without any intention to offend him, the speaker, using the verb *to suppose* and the exclamation *well* in speech, he reflects on what has been said, subordinating the speech act to the norms of politeness. The verb *to hope* is located in the second part of a number of the verbs of assumption we have listed, and the senses of uncertainty and doubt are not dominant in its semantic structure. The speaker says *I hope...* when he means that, in his opinion, what he wants to say,

almost certainly has every reason to be true. As a means of implementing politeness, the pronunciation of the verb *to hope* in the main clause inspires confidence and expectation of a positive effect, keeps the communicative partner in a good mood, encourages him to take decisive action or consoles, calms him down, as in the example: "I've advised her to ignore the letter and go to him."

"I hope she's too sensible to expose herself to a very terrible rebuff" [Maugham 1951, 180].

Thanks to the verb *to hope*, the statement sounds optimistic and convincing, which allows us to deduce the following proposition: the speaker is sure that the listener understands his intention. Subject to this condition, the verb to hope is used as a means of implementing politeness.

The common verb *to believe* expresses a significant degree of conviction in what was said or trust in the one who voiced it. Using this verb, the speaker, as in the cases described above, must know that the listener is familiar with this shade of meaning, only then the information of the statement will be relevant, and the pragmatic intention will be realized.

"Do you think it will stop?"

"Yes," Pablo said. "It is thinning now and there are small, hard pellets. the wind will blow but the snow is going. The wind has changed."

"Do you think it will clear tomorrow?" Robert Jordan asked him.

"Yes," Pablo said. "I believe it will be cold and clear. This wind is shifting"  
[Hemingway 1971, 108].

The use of the Future Indefinite in the subordinate clause indicates that the speaker is confident himself and knows that the listener is also interested in a favorable set of circumstances. A situation of moral support has been created in speech behavior, which is consistent with the requirement to be extremely polite. In this situation, this means interest in the interlocutor, his problems. The verb *to believe*, thus, performs the function of a means of implementing politeness.

The next two examples from the same work are illustrative enough to show that different meanings of the verbs *to believe* and *to hope* contribute to the



implementation of different pragmatic goals, nevertheless, both help to create a situation of friendly communication.

“I will be here on the left. Above, where I can see all and I will cover your left with this small máquina. Here. If they should come it would be possible to make a massacre. But you must not fire until they are that close.”

“I believe that we could make a massacre. Menuda matanza!” “But I hope they do not come” [Ibid., 265].

Lexical units that function as means of politeness implementation are exclamations; suggestive verbs that precede subordinate clauses in complex sentences; author's words that replace the unspoken, but implicitly assumed means of implementing politeness that correspond to them.

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